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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 000369

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR, INR/IAA AND INL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/11/2018
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [TD](#)
SUBJECT: FOUR MORE EXTRADITED FOR MAHARAJ'S KIDNAPPING

Classified By: Classified by Charge Len Kusnitz; Reason 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Four persons wanted in the 2005 kidnapping for ransom and murder of dual national (U.S./Trinidad) Balram "Balo" Maharaj were extradited to Washington, D.C. on August ¶4. Of the 15 originally arrested in the case, only three remain in T&T. The gruesome kidnapping and murder of "Balo" was front page news here, as was the FBI's latest extradition of suspects. The 2006 arrest of the 15 persons allegedly involved in the case -- greatly assisted by the FBI -- coincided with a precipitous drop in for ransom kidnappings. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Zion Clarke, Kevon Demerieux and soldiers Cpl. Ricardo de Four and Sgt. Leon Nurse were extradited August 5 to Washington, D.C. to face trial in the kidnapping and murder of dual national Balram "Balo" Maharaj. These four men, along with eleven others, allegedly entered a conspiracy to kidnap Maharaj outside the Samaan Tree Bar in Aranguez, San Juan on April 5, 2005. A ransom of TT\$3 million (about US\$500,000) was demanded, but no money was paid. On January 8, 2006, Maharaj's dismembered body was found in two containers in the Santa Cruz forest.

¶3. (C) Following a joint investigation with the FBI, fifteen persons were arrested. Of these 15, four agreed to go directly to the U.S. to stand trial (one was subsequently acquitted); eight decided to fight their extradition, and the three others were not indicted in the U.S. and remain subject to the local justice system. Earlier this year, four suspects lost their appeal and were extradited to the U.S. The remaining four have now joined their alleged colleagues in crime. In approving the latest extradition, Attorney General Bridgid Annisette-George noted the central role of the FBI in breaking the case and USG assurances that the death penalty would not be sought against the accused.

¶4. (C) The 2006 arrest of those alleged to be involved in the "Balo" case coincided with a sharp drop in for ransom kidnappings. In 2005, there were 58 such crimes. These fell to 17 in 2006 and 11 in 2007; there has been an uptick this year to 11 as of the start of August. Although the GOTT does not confirm the link, other information suggests those arrested were responsible for 20 - 30 kidnappings prior to their incarceration. Their "takedown" also seems to have given pause to other criminal gangs that law enforcement authorities, sometimes with outside aid (and especially in cases involving foreign nationals), were becoming more proficient at investigating kidnappings.
KUSNITZ